

## My Vocation Story

Stanton LATOMENE

Stanislaus is my baptism name, and Latomene is my family name. Besides, they used to call me Stanton since my childhood so now in the seminary I use this name, Stanton Latomene. I was born on the 11th of October, 1997. Regarding my siblings, we are five, four girls and one boy who is me. I am the fourth born in the family. Both of my parents are still alive with us. They are loving and caring parents who strongly embrace their faith. I came from a Catholic Christian family.

Fortunately, I was born safely as other infants after staying for 10 months in my mother's womb. Indeed, my mother almost died because of me, but somehow she gave birth to me very peacefully as other mothers do. In fact, I was born in a broken and damaged Aid-post which was set aside ready for renovation. I can't imagine how my mother was capable to take precaution for me at that time. Anyway, I am glad to be alive and to have come this far.

Prior to that initial unconscious experience, it happened that before my birth, my parents were praying consistently for a son to be born. So as the result of their prayers, God gave me to them among my four sisters. My parents become my first role models who influenced me in my basic understanding of God and guided me to cultivate my true self. As I grew up I lived out a sincere life through simplicity and humility.

As the time went by I then experienced other things apart from my religious way of live. I joined peer groups, was influenced to participate in vices. I was involved in bad practices and definitely overlooked some of my spiritual exercises. However, the practice that I never forget in my past life is prayer. Although I went astray and made my life miserable with earthly things, I kept holding onto my prayer life, especially devotion to our blessed mother Mary.

Furthermore, concerning my call to the priesthood, I would say it is a mystery which I cannot fully understand why and how God calls me to this vocation. Perhaps, God has planned my existence and implanted the qualities of a priest in me which I am not fully aware of.

I was about the age of three when I first received my call to the priesthood of Christ. This happened when I was listening to a priest giving his homily. I was with my mother in the church and I experienced this gracious moment in my life. I was really inspired by the homily of that particular priest so the eagerness was aroused in me. I mentioned it to my mother: I want to become a priest. At that very moment my mother kept these words. When I grew up she constantly supported me in my spiritual life and observe everything I did. Absolutely, she found out that my life is very simple, loving and prayerful.

I entered in to the secondary school to do my grades 9 to 12 but without a genuine aim because that call was still within me. There were expectations from other people wanting me to become a doctor, some thought I would become a teacher and all other sorts of professions. Anyway, in 2017 when I did my grade 12, God in his own ways and time changed everything in me, even my temporary goals that I set. I attended a 'Come and See program' and I passed the entry test for the seminary before sitting for my grade 12 final examination. At the end of the year I received my acceptance letter to enter into the seminary for priestly studies. However, there was a clash in my offers, which was one of the difficult moments that I encountered. At the moment I received my acceptance letter I also received my offer to further my studies in Lae University of Technology, since I took science.

Finally, I made my choice to continue in the seminary and not to go on the other way. In 2018 and 2019 I did my Propaedeutic 1 and 2 in Rapolo Seminary. In 2020 I continued on to my spiritual year formation in St Fidelis Seminary. So in this year, 2021, I am fervent to come this far to advance my Philosophical studies for priesthood in Catholic Theological Institute, Bomana. Actually, as for me, when moving from one stage to another in priestly studies, it deepens and affirms my call to this vocation. But I would say that it is not the end because my journey, and searching for God is still continuing. I believe prayer is the most precious tool to guide and support me in my vocation.